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The International Swim Schools Association represents a diverse range of leading aquatic educators, who are engaged in providing positive learning experiences for the children and families they serve.

There are a wide range of needs served by these Swim Schools and individual swimming teachers. The culture and area of the world in which they operate can influence which needs are prioritised.

In regions where paediatric drowning is prevalent, water safety and drowning prevention are often given a strong focus. Other's primary aim may be to develop parent-child bonding and attachment, along with a broad scope of developmental benefits for the child. These areas of focus are not mutually exclusive, and all should be addressed by all programs.

Position Statement #4

Swimming lessons free of force and trauma

The treatment of children in ISSA swim schools must be free from force, toxic stress and actions that are likely to inflict trauma.

The United Nations in their Convention on the Rights of the Child, states that all appropriate measures must be taken to "protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation … while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child."

A universal theme supported by all ISSA Swim Schools is absolute respect for the rights of the child. This includes listening to and validating input from the child about their needs, and how they are feeling at all times - including any form of communication from the child, including verbal, non-verbal, crying, physical resistance, body language and withdrawal.

Whenever there are indications a child is unhappy, disengaged, withdrawn or upset, the focus must immediately be on calming them, comforting them, and returning the child to a state of comfort and active engagement. This will often involve facilitating the child's connection with their primary carer, especially if a separation between the parent/carer and child was contributing to the child's distress.

Creating stress in a child is never rationalised because of the skill being developed. The end does not justify the means. The experience the child has, and the process they go through, is of paramount importance.

Swim Schools around the world play a key role in helping families and their children grow into healthier, happier, and safer people - The swimming lessons they provide must be free of force, toxic stress or trauma.

References

Convention on the Rights of the Child. United Nations, 2014
https://australianswimschools.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/UN-Rights-of-the-Child.pdf